

Supervisor Romaine, Councilmen Mazzei and Panico Discuss Federal Government Plan to Raise Over 4,400 L.I. Homes

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Pictured left to right are Deputy Supervisor/Councilman Dan Panico, Supervisor Ed Romaine, Councilman Tim Mazzei, Patchogue Village Mayor Paul Pontieri, Patchogue Community Development Agency Director Marian Russo, Mastic Beach Village Trustees Gail Cappiello and Bob Morrow.

Farmingville, NY - Brookhaven Town Supervisor Ed Romaine, Councilman Tim Mazzei, Councilman Dan Panico and Village of Patchogue Mayor Paul Pontieri and Mastic Beach Village officials today joined local residents affected by Hurricane Sandy at a press conference to discuss the challenges and benefits of the 83-mile federal Fire Island to Montauk Point (FIMP) project.

The plan calls for raising over 4,400 Long Island homes as part of the \$700 million Federal Government flood plan, and rebuilding the dune system on Fire Island. Hundreds of Brookhaven residents will have their homes raised so that they are less vulnerable in the event of powerful storms and flood conditions, changing the structure of Long Island's south shore. The \$700 million federal strategy for protecting Long Island from hurricanes and other powerful storms dedicates a vast amount of aid to raising thousands of South Shore homes and roads as well as restoring dunes and widening beaches.

"Hundreds of Brookhaven residents who were affected by Sandy will have the opportunity to benefit from this program," said Supervisor Romaine. "The far-reaching benefits will help make our shoreline communities safer and less vulnerable to future storm damage. I applaud the federal government for taking this action and will do everything I can to assist in the implementation of the plan. However, I am asking that they also include reimbursement of administrative costs to the Town to help expedite the process and return people back to their homes more quickly."

Councilman Mazzei said, "The damage to the dunes on Fire Island has created an immediate danger that needs to be addressed and it appears that this plan does just that. I expect to be working closely with residents, the Federal Government and our Town Building Department to assure that all is being done to move this program along."

"The proposed plan is welcome news to those who have been patiently waiting for this Federal assistance," commented Brookhaven Town Councilman Dan Panico. "However, I cannot underscore enough how massive and involved this effort will be on the Town side with respect to building and permitting. The Town will certainly need a



commitment from our federal representative that assistance, financial or otherwise, will be forthcoming to insure that these raised structures are inspected and safe."

Mayor Pontieri said, "Sandy caused unprecedented flood damage in Patchogue and many residents need to raise their homes. The cost for most people has been a deterrent, but this plan will give them the chance to now get it done. I look forward to joining Supervisor Romaine and Councilman Mazzie in their efforts."

The plan calls for homes in flood-prone mainland communities off bays and inlets to be elevated. The initial phase of the project includes the restoration of

the barrier island's battered dune line, and is expected to be delivered to state and local officials later this month.

Following that, South Shore homes in designated 2-, 6- and 10-year flood plains would then start being raised -- at no cost to the owners. Major funding would come from the nearly \$51 billion Sandy aid bill approved by Congress. This is the first major home-raising effort of its kind on Long Island and has been a central component in other federal flood-control packages, including those in Louisiana and New Jersey.

Since Hurricane Sandy, the Town of Brookhaven has consistently called for the rebuilding of the dune system on Long Island to protect the south shore mainland. Today, some portions of Fire Island have nearly no dunes in place, especially areas east of Smith Point, that leave the area completely unprotected from wash-overs. Should we be hit by a winter storm, communities such as Mastic Beach, Brookhaven Hamlet and Center Moriches remain vulnerable while the dunes remain in their present condition.

Under the FIMP plan, 39 homes on Fire Island are slated for demolition. Approximately half a dozen of these homes can be moved back on their existing property to avoid being removed. Brookhaven has offered to transfer town-owned property in Davis Park at present value to the Army Corps of Engineers to allow another 6-8 homes in that community to be moved there, saving on demolition and acquisition costs.

Several hundred homes in Brookhaven Town would be included in the federal plan for raising residences in the flood area. Because this will cause many of these homes to raise above existing height restrictions, Romaine said the Town board will pass legislation to automatically grant these houses height variances. Romaine added that the town will seek federal assistance for costs associated with the additional inspections which will be needed to ensure that these homes are safe, and have inspections expedited to return people to their homes quickly. Brookhaven will also request that the federal government reimburse those residents in the designated flood area who have already paid to have their homes raised.

Brookhaven Town also stands ready to assist the federal government in wildlife and habitat restoration in the Sandy-affected area. However, because hundreds of thousands of cubic yards of sand were pushed into the South Shore Bays and estuaries, the Town is requesting the federal government include funding for the dredging of these creeks and waterways in the area. This would increase the flow of these tributaries to their previous levels, reducing areas of stagnant water that may create increased mosquito breeding and other public health and safety concerns.

The federal government has called on local municipalities to rezone waterfront property to prevent development in flood zones. Romaine said that Brookhaven is happy to work with the federal government on this effort. However, the trepidation is that rezoning of this property will be considered by property owners, and the courts, as a "taking," costing hundreds of thousands of dollars in court costs and delaying these efforts for several years. Because of this, the Town is asking the federal government to either indemnify the town in this effort, or to provide the needed funds to purchase and preserve these parcels.

